

**2015-2016 PROPOSED BUDGET
RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

DEPARTMENT: Fire

REQUEST NO.: 131

REQUESTED BY: Gallo

DATE REQUESTED: 08/13/15

DATE POSTED: 08/14/15

REQUEST: The FY 2016 Proposed Budget for Fire includes \$903,971 in personnel costs related to the addition of 36 firefighters in FY 2015 due to an expiring SAFER grant. Are these former grant funded positions needed going forward or can they be rolled up into existing firefighter positions?

RESPONSE:

The Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant is from the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The grant program was established to help fire departments increase the number of trained, “front line” firefighters available in their communities. The grant provided two years of salary, beginning with cadet training salaries, to stimulate hiring new fire personnel. The additional firefighters allowed AFD to complete a four-person staffing plan that began with a City Council Resolution in January 2008. Because of the grant, AFD was able to complete the staffing plan more than five years ahead of schedule.

The 36 firefighter positions were added to the Austin Fire Department (AFD) authorized strength in FY 2012-2013. The grant funded positions are treated the same as General Fund firefighter positions and they cannot be “rolled up”. While AFD always has vacant firefighter positions due to ongoing retirements and other separations, the department’s goal is to be as close to fully staffed as possible – all 1,129 positions are needed. In FY 2014-2015, AFD received \$2.1 million in operations funding to begin the transition from grant to General Fund. The \$903,971 added in the FY 2015-2016 Proposed Budget completes the funding transition.